

PAUL JONES' GOLD SWORD.

A Philadelphia Possessor, Louis XVI's Gift to the Brave Captain.

Carefully treasured in the library of a well-known Philadelphian is a long case of red leather, heavily padded and strongly secured. Inside this case rests a scabbard containing a sword, which Louis XVI of France presented to Paul Jones, after the latter had caused the Serapis to haul down her colors by a tremendous fight with his frigate the Bonhomme Richard.

That battle, which historians say was one of the most bitter naval encounters ever recorded, occurred September 22, 1779, off Flamborough, on the northeast coast of England. Soon after the sun went down that evening the Bonhomme Richard sighted a strange frigate bearing down upon her. In those days the naval commander had to be ready for action at any moment; so when the stranger hailed the Bonhomme Richard Paul Jones' crew were prepared.

They waited until the newcomer was within half a pistol shot, and then discovered her to be the Serapis. Then and not until then the American commander ordered a broadside. It was returned, and before the smoke cleared away the Serapis was hopelessly entangled in the Bonhomme Richard's rigging. But Paul was in for a fight, and he ordered his men to grapple to the Serapis.

By the time this was accomplished the vessels had drifted alongside each other, and there they lay, their cannons' mouths touching each other, as the calm moon looked down and saw the men fighting with broadswords and pistols, marlinspikes and muskets, while the cannon belched, the wounded shrieked, the dying groaned.

But on went the fight, the sea sucking in the life-blood that trickled into it. Oh! it was horrible! And at last, when 11 o'clock had nearly come, the Serapis hauled down her colors.

Paul Jones was victorious in one of the most dreadful of naval encounters. News of the great struggle quickly sped far away, and, shortly after the victor reached France, he received word that King Louis XVI had heard with wonder and admiration of his deeds. The whole land was talking of him, praising or cursing according to each one's opinion. But on a certain day those Frenchmen who cursed Jones and called him a pirate, held their tongues. For Louis XVI himself selected a magnificent sword, and sent it personally to the Yankee Commodore with the expression of admiration and well wishes.

Paul Jones received before and afterward many gifts from those high up in the world's affairs, but none of them did he value more than this sword, which is preserved here in Philadelphia. Upon his death it was given to Robert Morris, who in turn bequeathed it to Commodore Barry. The latter gave it to the present owner's grandfather, who was Paul Jones' Lieutenant in that terrible naval encounter.

The sword is long and keen, of exquisite workmanship. The upper half of the blade is heavily enameled and chased, and upon it are engraven two legends. One reads:—

Vive Le Roy!
And the other, which is just under the hilt, is as follows:—
Louis XVI, Rewarder of the Valiant Defender of the Freedom of the Sea.

The hilt itself is of solid gold, a mass of intricate engraving and chasing. Herewith are published sketches of the sword and a fac-simile of the signature of John Paul Jones.—Philadelphia Press.

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